

2023

## Expectations in Film Relationships: The Suffocation Model in Motion Pictures

Rachel McNeil  
*Union College*

Lindsay C. Morton  
*Marywood University, lcmorton@maryu.marywood.edu*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholar.utc.edu/mps>



Part of the [Psychology Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

McNeil, Rachel and Morton, Lindsay C. (2023) "Expectations in Film Relationships: The Suffocation Model in Motion Pictures," *Modern Psychological Studies*: Vol. 29: No. 1, Article 29.  
Available at: <https://scholar.utc.edu/mps/vol29/iss1/29>

This article is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals, Magazines, and Newsletters at UTC Scholar. It has been accepted for inclusion in Modern Psychological Studies by an authorized editor of UTC Scholar. For more information, please contact [scholar@utc.edu](mailto:scholar@utc.edu).

### **Abstract**

The suffocation model states that marriage expectations in American culture have changed across time (Finkel et al., 2014). To test whether or not the tenets of this model appear in popular media, we examined the representation of love, belonging, esteem, and self-actualization needs in romantic relationships of films from the companionate era (1850-1965) and the self-expressive era (1965-present). Participants ( $N = 56$ ) rated need fulfillment and expectations within the main romantic relationship in an assigned film. The results suggest that the shift in needs posited by the suffocation model was reflected in high-grossing romance films from the past 100 years. Research limitations and future directions are discussed along with the implications for the bidirectional influence of culture and film.

*Keywords:* suffocation model, Maslow's hierarchy of needs, romantic relationships, film, media portrayals

### **Expectations in Film Relationships: The Suffocation Model in Motion Pictures**

“And they lived happily ever after”...it is a familiar ending to any movie about romance, but does the way romantic relationships are depicted in American films reflect something true about real life? A variety of researchers and theorists (e.g., Albrecht, 1954; Bandura, 2001; Basinger, 2012; Belton, 1996; Grodal, 2009) suggest that the answer is yes – that films not only reflect social reality but also inform society about the desires, dreams, and challenges that are characteristic of romantic relationships. Thus, in some ways the movie ideal of “happily ever after” might represent a two-way mirror on American culture.

Although American marriages have shifted over time, many Americans do seem to find that “special someone”. In fact, it is estimated that between 65-83% of American men and women have been married at least once in their lives (Wang, 2020; Wang & Parker, 2014). At the same time, a little over 20% of these people will experience divorce at some point during their lives (Kreider & Ellis, 2011). When looking across time, it becomes clear that divorce rates surged in the 1970-80’s and while decreasing slightly, they have not returned to the rates seen in the earlier half of the twentieth century. Although, there are undoubtedly many reasons why American marriages fail. The suffocation model predicts American marriages are failing due to an expectation that a spouse must fulfill different types of needs that require greater time and resources than in the past (Finkel, 2017; Finkel et al., 2015; Finkel et al., 2014).

Obviously, this is not the only theory on love and marriage (or its failure). Psychologists have developed a multitude of theories regarding the topic, including but not limited to: Bowlby’s (1969) attachment theory, Kelley and Thibaut’s (1978) interdependence theory, and Sternberg’s (1968) triangular theory of love. Large bodies of research attest to the presence of such dynamics within romantic relationships in the United States, and it is possible that such theories not only account for observed relationship dynamics in the laboratory and field but may also be represented on the silver screen. In line with this idea, the goal of this study was to determine if

this historical trend posited by the suffocation model can also be observed in romantic relationships portrayed in popular film over time. This would provide information about the premise that cinematic presentations may provide information about cultural practices and norms and would test the extent to which the suffocation model may be seen in the historical record of popular films.

### **The Suffocation Model**

According to the suffocation model (Finkel et al., 2014), throughout American history, the fundamental purpose of marriage has shifted in a way that follows the ascension of Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs. Maslow (1943) proposed that an ordered set of needs actively motivated and organized each individual's behavior. He argued that in order for individuals to seek fulfillment of higher-level needs, lower-level needs must first be satisfied. Although the order of the hierarchy could vary across individuals, and other factors were recognized as also determining behavior, this hierarchical model was proposed to predict a person's primary focus and striving. Finkel and colleagues (2014) hypothesized how this ascension of Maslow's hierarchy plays out in marriage expectations and how this relates to cultural changes that happened throughout American history in three major eras of marriage.

During the institutional era (1776-1859), American society was largely agrarian and formal social institutions regarding love and romance were for the most part absent (Finkel et al., 2014; Finkel et al., 2015). Marriage during this era functioned to provide spouses with food, shelter, a reproductive partner, economic support, and physical protection. This largely corresponds with Maslow's (1943, 1954) physiological needs (e.g., food, water, sex, warmth, and shelter) and safety needs (e.g., security, stability, and order). Thus, Finkel and colleagues (2014; 2015) posit that spouses of the institutional era mainly expected their physiological and safety needs to be met through their marriages.

Following this period, the companionate era (1850-1965) began, during which spouses came to expect love, intimacy, and passion within their marriages. This largely corresponds with

Maslow's (1943; 1954) love needs, which include intimacy, companionship, trust, affection, and friendship. According to Finkel and colleagues (2014; 2015) views of marriage shifted due to societal changes. At the start of this period, spouses' lives were mainly segregated along gender lines. For example, employment for men was more likely to be found outside the home, whereas women were more likely to attend to the domestic duties of housekeeping and childrearing. Being that economic success was no longer based on what happened within one's home, people sought marriage more often for the purpose of love. Moreover, Americans in large part shifted into more urban and financially secure lifestyles, creating less need for a marital partner who provided safety and security. Finally, in the latter part of this period, men and women began to socialize more frequently, which resulted in an increased desire for finding passion and romance in one's marital relationship. Thus, Finkel and colleagues (2014; 2015) posit that individuals came to believe that marriage functioned less for satisfying physiological and safety needs and more for satisfying love needs.

Today we find ourselves in the self-expressive era (1965-present), in which spouses expect marriage to promote self-esteem and allow for self-expression and personal growth (Finkel et al., 2014; Finkel et al., 2015). This largely corresponds with Maslow's (1943; 1954) esteem needs, which include needs for self-esteem, achievement, mastery, and independence, and the need for self-actualization, in which a person seeks to realize his or her full potential and to achieve self-fulfillment, personal growth, and peak experiences. This shift in marital expectations dovetails cultural movements at the start of this time period that made sexual activity outside of marriage more acceptable and traditional gender-based roles less required (Finkel et al. 2014; Finkel et al., 2015). In addition, the counterculture of the 1960's helped to emphasize ideas of self-expression and self-discovery. With current levels of decreased social networks and expanded lifespan, Finkel and colleagues (2014; 2015) suggest that spouses may come to increasingly be relied upon to fulfill various social and personal needs. Along with this is an increasing desire for a marital partner that supports one as a unique individual and all that

entails, including the person's interests, goals, sexuality, values, and beliefs. Thus, in the self-expressive era, marriage partners expect fulfillment of esteem and self-actualization needs.

Finkel and colleagues (2015) pointed out that the level of investment needed to help a spouse fulfill these higher-level needs is much greater, as this process requires deep insight into the spouse's needs and psychological essence in addition to time, energy, and effort. This is because higher level needs are often more specific to the individual than lower level needs such as food and shelter. However, this increasing need for investment is simultaneously met with reduced available resources to contribute to this process. For example, couples are spending much less time together than in previous eras (Dew, 2009), they have fewer mutual friends, and do significantly less quantifiable activities together (Amato et al., 2009). Americans also are experiencing more stress than in previous eras (Cohen & Janicki-Deverts, 2012) and when individuals have less psychological resources to spare for their partner, their relationship contributions suffer (Buck & Neff, 2012; Demerouti et al., 2012). Thus, the suffocation model suggests that in the United States today, individuals are expecting significantly more difficult-to-fulfill needs to be met through their marriages than at earlier times in our country's history, which may be one reason for current high divorce rates and reduced ratings of marital satisfaction (Finkel et al., 2014; Finkel et al., 2015). In understanding the suffocation model as the relation between the three eras of marriage, the varying marriage expectations according to Maslow's hierarchy that correspond with those eras, and the effect this has on marital satisfaction and quality, this study begins to examine how such changes can be seen in the cinematic portrayal of romantic relationships over time.

### **The Current Study**

The present study aimed to examine whether the second shift of expectations outlined by the suffocation model could be seen in the evolution of widely viewed films over the last 100 years. The goal was to compare the portrayal of middle-level "love needs," such as the need for intimacy and the need to belong, and higher level "self needs," such as the need for esteem and

for self-actualization, in romantic relationships in films made during the companionate era (1850-1965) and films made during the self-expressive era (1965-present). The suffocation model explains that during the companionate era the highest expectations are for love needs with relatively low expectations for self needs (Finkel et al., 2014). In contrast, during the self-expressive era marital partners expected both high levels of love needs and high levels of self needs. Based upon the suffocation model, we hypothesized the following: (H1) The romantic relationships portrayed in films of the self-expressive era and those portrayed in the companionate era would be rated as having similar representations of love needs. (H2) The romantic relationships portrayed in films of the self-expressive era would be rated as having a greater representation of self needs, compared to those portrayed in films of the companionate era.

## Method

### Participants

Young adults (ages 18-24) represent the highest per capita attendance at the movies (Goldstein, 2017; Motion Picture Association of America, 2016), and adults ages 18-29 are also the more likely to watch movies at home on a regular basis compared to all other age groups (Stoll, 2021). Due, in part, to these characteristics, young adults were thus selected as an appropriate group with experience in watching movies. The size of our convenience sample size was determined by the maximum number of participants that could be collected during a one-semester undergraduate research project. In total, fifty-six undergraduate students participated in this study after providing informed consent. Participants were recruited online and provided with either psychology course credits or cash as compensation for completing the study. The participants reported consistent biological sex and gender identity with a total of 24 cisgender men and 32 cisgender women. They were between the ages of 17 and 22 years old ( $M = 19.68$ ,  $SD = 1.34$ ). Most participants (94.6%) were not Hispanic or Latino; 3.6% were Hispanic or Latino, and 1.8% preferred not to answer the question. Participants reported their race as white

(60.7%), Asian (21.4%), black or African American (8.9%), other (5.4%), or more than one racial identification (1.8%); 1.8% preferred not to answer the question. Majority of participants (87.5%) identified a heterosexual or straight sexual orientation; 1.8% identified as bisexual, 1.8% identified as demisexual, and 8.9% preferred not to answer the question. Seven (12.5%) participants were not native English speakers. The results did not differ when these participants were excluded from subsequent analyses, and thus they were included.

## **Materials**

Movies for the study were selected with consistent criteria to find the most widely-seen romantic movies of each decade from 1920 to 2016. Using the Internet Movie Database (IMDB), the top U.S. grossing romance film of each decade was selected. Top-grossing was defined as the highest amount of money grossed from box office sales. A film was determined “romantic” if the film was tagged with the “Romance” genre within its top three characterizing genres on the IMDB website for the given decade. Table 1 includes the full list of films, year of release, amount grossed based on IMDB record, and the number of participants who viewed and rated each film. For the companionate era, *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* (1921), *Gone with the Wind* (1939), *The Best Years of Our Lives* (1946), *The Greatest Show on Earth* (1952), and *Dr. Zhivago* (1965) were presented. For the self-expressive era, *Grease* (1978), *Tootsie* (1982), *Titanic* (1997), *Spider-Man* (2002), and *Bridesmaids* (2011) were presented. *Dr. Zhivago* was produced in 1965, the transition year from the companionate era to the self-expressive era, and the results did not differ when responses for this film were excluded from subsequent analyses.

## **Measures and Tasks**

### ***Film questionnaire***

This measure consisted of 64 questions aimed at assessing how each film represented the needs for love, self-esteem, and self-actualization corresponding to Maslow’s (1943; 1954) hierarchy. These items were developed based on the very similar descriptions of each need



presented in Maslow (1943; 1954). Specifically, the love need is explained as involving the need for the giving and receiving of love, the need for affection, the need for belongingness and as being focused on both friendships, familial connections, and romantic/sexual relationships. Thus, the five components of the overarching love need were the needs for: love, affection, belongingness, companionship, and romantic passion. Each included a definition (e.g., the need for love was explained to participants as: “some people desire for a relationship in which they can give and receive adoration and devotion”). These definitions were based on the writings of Maslow’s (1943; 1954).

The self-esteem need is explained as involving self-esteem (i.e., high evaluation of the self, based on external reality), self-respect, feelings of confidence and worth, and desires for adequacy and reputation (Maslow, 1943; 1954). Thus, the six components of the overarching self-esteem need were the needs for: self-esteem, adequacy, self-respect, worth, reputation, and confidence. Each included a definition (e.g., the need for self-esteem was explained to participants as: “some people desire for relationships that provide a stable, high evaluation of the self, based on their real capacities and/or achievements”). Again, these definitions were based on the writings of Maslow’s (1943; 1954).

The need for self-actualization is explained as involving desires for self-fulfillment (i.e., to become what one could potentially be), personal growth, insight into one’s own psychological essence, self-expression, and the pursuit of self-discovery (Maslow, 1943; 1954). Thus, the five components of the overarching self-esteem need were the needs for: self-fulfillment, personal growth, understanding, self-expression, and self-discovery. Each included a definition (e.g., the need for self-fulfillment was explained to participants as: “Some people desire for relationships that help them to become what they could potentially be”). As before, these definitions were based on the writings of Maslow’s (1943; 1954).

Two statements were associated with each need: love, affection, belongingness, companionship, romantic passion, self-esteem, adequacy, self-respect, worth, reputation,

confidence, self-fulfillment, personal growth, understanding, self-expression, and self-discovery. The statements targeted a) the extent to which each partner expected the relationship to fulfill the specified need and b) the extent to which the relationship fulfilled the specified need for that person. Thus, there were a total of 32 unique statements, and participants rated each statement once for the female portrayed and once for the male portrayed (i.e., 64 total items). Using a 6-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree), participants were asked to indicate agreement or disagreement with these statements. The love and belonging assessment included five needs (20 items total): the needs for love, affection, belongingness, companionship, and romantic passion. These have been titled the “love needs.” The esteem and self-actualization assessment included eleven needs (44 items total): the needs for self-esteem, adequacy, self-respect, worth, reputation, confidence, self-fulfillment, personal growth, self-discovery, understanding, and self-expression. These have been titled the “self needs.” A definition of each need was provided to participants. For example, the following definition for the need for adequacy was provided: “Some people desire relationships that make them feel as though they are good enough, acceptable, and/or satisfactory.” Each definition was based on Maslow’s (1943, 1954) explanation of the needs and foci of each corresponding stage.

### ***Demographic Questionnaire***

This questionnaire consisted of seven multiple-choice questions. The questions addressed age, biological sex, gender identity, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, and native language.

### **Procedure**

The current study involved film-screenings, during which participants answered questions about how the main romantic relationship portrayed the needs Maslow (1943) identified. Based on these responses, we analyzed the difference between the films made in the companionate era and the self-expressive era regarding representation of expectations and

need fulfillment. Participants were randomly assigned to watch one film. Twenty-eight participants were randomly assigned to watch films from the companionate era (1850-1965), and 28 participants were randomly assigned to watch films from the self-expressive era (1966-present). Then all participants completed two questionnaires at the end. Before each film began, participants were told the name of the film, its length, and the two characters on which they were to focus their attention. Participants were specifically asked to pay particular attention to how each person helps fulfill individual and interpersonal goals, specifically receiving and providing fulfillment for one another. The participants then watched the film under supervision to make sure they viewed the entirety of the film without distractions. Following this they answered both a demographic questionnaire and a questionnaire designed to measure the two variables, expectations and fulfillment, within the context of the two previously identified characters' relationship.

### **Results**

The film questionnaire asked participants to list the film being viewed and the characters being observed to ensure that participants were, in fact, focused on the correct relationships. All participants responded correctly to these items. To analyze the depiction of needs presented in the film, participants answered 20 items about the expectation and fulfillment of love needs for each member of the romantic couple. As evidence of the reliability of the newly constructed measure, these 20 items evidenced good internal consistency,  $\alpha = 0.88$ . Participants answered 44 items about the expectation and fulfillment of self needs for each member of the romantic couple. As evidence of the reliability of the newly constructed measure, these 44 items evidenced strong internal consistency,  $\alpha = 0.95$ .

To test if films from the companionate era differed from films from the self-expressive era in their presentation of love needs and self needs, a multivariate analysis of variance was performed using the general linear model test in IBM SPSS Statistics 19. Using Box's test of equality of covariance matrices, it was shown that the assumption of equal covariance matrices

across the two groups was met,  $p = 0.57$ . The multivariate test was significant,  $F(2, 53) = 5.61$ ,  $p < 0.01$ , partial  $\eta^2 = 0.18$ , observed power = 0.84. Using Levene's test, the assumption for homogeneity of variance for each dependent variable was also met: love needs,  $F(1, 54) = 0.02$ ,  $p = 0.90$ ; self needs,  $F(1, 54) = 2.32$ ,  $p = 0.13$ . As seen in Figure 1, love needs were higher among self-expressive era films ( $M = 4.44$ ,  $SD = 0.71$ ) than among companionate era films ( $M = 3.99$ ,  $SD = 0.72$ ),  $F(1, 56) = 5.48$ ,  $p = 0.02$ , partial  $\eta^2 = 0.09$ , observed power = 0.63. Also seen in Figure 1, self needs were also higher among self-expressive era films ( $M = 4.37$ ,  $SD = 0.64$ ) than among companionate era films ( $M = 3.72$ ,  $SD = 0.81$ )  $F(1, 56) = 5.99$ ,  $p < 0.01$ , partial  $\eta^2 = 0.17$ , observed power = 0.91.

### Discussion

We hypothesized that there would be similar ratings of love needs portrayed in romantic relationships across the two eras of films. This hypothesis was not supported, as slightly higher love needs were found in the self-expressive era (1966-present) than in the companionate era (1850-1965) films. This finding is in contrast to our hypothesis and does not support the exact propositions of the suffocation model. Finkel and colleagues (2014; 2017) specifically depicted the extent to which individuals expect a marriage to help them fulfill particular needs in a given era. Although love needs were expected at the highest levels during the companionate era, they were not absent from the expectations of those in the self-expressive era, where they were still present at relatively high levels. Finkel et al. (2014; 2015) suggested that the expectations for love needs in the self-expressive era would not surpass those in the companionate era, and thus this contrary finding warrants further investigation in the real lives of married couples.

We also hypothesized that the romantic relationships portrayed in films of the self-expressive era would be rated as having a greater portrayal of self needs compared to those portrayed in films of the companionate era. This hypothesis was supported by the results. These results are in line with the suffocation model, which suggests that as marriage shifted from the

companionate era to the self-expressive era, relationship partners began to expect and seek to fulfill greater self needs (Finkel et al., 2014; Finkel et al., 2015). Such needs include needs for self-esteem, reputation, confidence, personal growth, self-discovery, and self-expression. These and others were measured in the current study, and thus it appears that films in the self-expressive era may in fact be more likely to showcase such self needs as a component of romantic relationships.

### **Limitations**

One limitation of the methodology of this study is that the films selected were not focused explicitly on marriage. The suffocation model is one of the shifting needs and expectations in American marriages, but the films selected simply portrayed romantic relationships more generally. Finkel and colleagues (2014) clearly explain that although the model is one focused on marriage, it is likely to have ramifications for romantic relationships outside of the realm of traditional marriage. Moreover, Jeanine Basinger (2012) extensively studied “marriage movies” and quite rightly points out that such films are incredibly difficult to identify, as very rarely do films focus on marriage explicitly as the plot focus. We chose to focus on widely viewed films that clearly presented romantic relationships at the forefront of the films plot. We also wanted to utilize film selection criteria that were less subjective than that of Basinger’s (2012) sociological investigation and that could be replicated by other researchers. Thus, we opted to examine romantic relationships not exclusive to marriage. It remains to be tested whether or not films that portray solely marriage relationships reflect the suffocation model.

Another limitation of this study was the fact that our participant pool consisted of mostly heterosexual, unmarried, college-age students. These individuals may have rated these films differently than people of other generations, sexualities, and relationship statuses potentially may have. By randomly assigning participants to the film viewed, this removed possible selection biases that may be created if the participants were allowed to self-select the films.

However, it is possible that third variables associated with this sample may cause the results to differ when looking at participants who are older, married, or non-heterosexual.

### **Future Directions**

The suffocation model depicts three essential inputs: expectations, altitude, and oxygenation (Finkel et al., 2014). Expectations, as described previously, involve the extensiveness of the needs that marriage partners suppose their spouse will fulfill. Altitude refers to the specific types of needs expected in the marriage, and oxygenation refers to the resources that a marital partner has that may help him or her to fulfill the expectations of specific needs. This study only looked at expectations and altitude and did not explore how oxygenation is portrayed in film. Future researchers should therefore explore the various resources, such as interpersonal skills, psychological capability, and situational factors, that are depicted in the romantic relationships of different film eras and if these reflect the oxygenation input of the suffocation model.

Another area of possible research would be examining gender differences between relationship expectations and need fulfillment of male and female characters represented in the films. For example, are female characters more likely to expect fulfillment of certain needs than male characters? Are male characters' needs fulfilled more often than female characters' needs? Does this change follow the 1965 shift proposed by the suffocation model? This could contribute to a broader conversation regarding the representation of gender in film and how it relates to the original model of relationship expectations. Moreover, this study could potentially be applied to additional research on a broader variety of romance films if Finkel and colleagues' (2014) original model on marriage expectations is found to apply to non-heterosexual relationships and non-traditional couples (e.g., consensually non-monogamous). As it stands, this research and the model on which it is based, cannot provide information about the expectations that millions of Americans might have in their romantic relationships, whether or

not these expectations might be portrayed in film, and the effects such expectations have on relationship duration and quality.

### **Conclusion**

These results open new conversation into how films portray cultural expectations about relationships. The connections between film and society are complex and mutually influential, and film is just one of many systemic factors that affect consumers' thoughts, feelings, and behaviors (Bandura, 2001). Film also offers a reflection of society, representing various aspects of sociocultural beliefs, desires, and norms (Albrecht, 1954). Thus, film and American culture have bidirectional influences on one another. Specifically, motion pictures provide the American public with information about shifts as well as norms in the nation's sociocultural and economic and political systems, beliefs, and values (Belton, 1996). Coexisting with this influence, the Americans involved in the creation of a film - from the producer and director to the set, costume, and art directors and the editorial staff - are inexorably intertwined with the culture in which they find themselves. The choices that they make regarding the final film product are, in part, determined by their American identity and existence in American society. Thus, the findings of this study may reflect not only the influence of culture on film but also the effect that such messages from a motion picture might have on the general public. Future research would be needed to elucidate the specific ways in which this relationship between the historical tenets of the suffocation model and the depictions of romantic relationships in popular films might have developed.

This research also contributes to the conversation of how film creators may impose their own expectations and desires on the media they create for consumption. The fact that these films were the highest grossing romance films of their decades is significant for two reasons. The influence of the filmmaker's ideology can be consciously lessened in mainstream cinema if that ideology is outside the realm of what is popular in a given era (Hjort, 2012). From another perspective, box office success may indicate that the film has successfully tapped into a

fundamental essence or discussion within American society (Sutton & Wogan, 2009). Film is often seen as a way to explore and represent our inner most desires and fantasies as well as our nightmares and troubles (Mazierska, 2015). Thus, out of all films produced, the mainstream, widely popular films are the most likely to demonstrate the relationship expectations that are characteristic of the era during which they are made. Because the shift outlined by Finkel and colleagues' suffocation model (2014, 2015, 2017) was represented in the evolution of high-grossing romance films, it is plausible that the expectations and desires within relationships of a specific time period have also been represented in films made during that period.

With all of this said, it is important to note that the specific relationship between what is expressed in film and popular consciousness is not always straightforward, but these reciprocal influences should be considered nonetheless (e.g., Albrecht, 1954; Bandura, 2001; Belton, 1996). The way in which filmmakers and audiences interact with film is no doubt connected to the general feeling of a given film. Specific studies like this one help to break down these connections and inspire investigation into the ways in which culture and film may affect one another.



### References

- Albrecht, M. C. (1954). The relationship of literature and society. *American Journal of Sociology*, 59(5), 425-436. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2772244>
- Amato, P.R., Booth, A., Johnson, D.R., & Rogers, S.J. (2009). *Alone together: How marriage in America is changing*. Harvard University Press. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvjk2x42>
- Apatow, J., Mendel, B., Townsend, C. (Producers), & Feig, P. (Director). (2011). *Bridesmaids* [Motion picture]. Universal Pictures.
- Bandura, A. (2001). Social cognitive theory of mass communication. *Media Psychology*, 3(3), 265-299. [https://doi.org/10.1207/S1532785XMEP0303\\_03](https://doi.org/10.1207/S1532785XMEP0303_03)
- Basinger, J. (2012). *I do and I don't: A History of marriage in the movies*. Vintage Books.
- Belton, J. (1996). *Movies and mass culture*. Rutgers University Press.
- Buck, A. A., & Neff, L.A. (2012). Stress spillover in early marriage: The role of self-regulatory depletion. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 26(5), 698-708. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0029260>
- Cameron, J., Landau, J. (Producers), & Cameron, J. (Director). (1997). *Titanic* [Motion picture]. Paramount Pictures & 20th Century Fox.
- Cohen, S., & Janicki-Deverts, D. (2012). Who's stressed? Distributions of psychological stress in the United States in probability samples from 1983, 2006, and 2009. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 42(6), 1320-1334. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1559-1816.2012.00900.x>
- Demerouti, E., Bakker, A.B., Sonnentag, S., & Fullagar, C.J. (2012). Work-related flow and energy at work and at home: A study on the role of daily recovery. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 33(2), 276-295. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.760>
- DeMille, C.B. (Producer & Director). (1952). *The greatest show on earth* [Motion picture]. Paramount Pictures.

- Dew, J. (2009). Has the marital time cost of parenting changed over time? *Social Forces*, 88(2), 519-541. <https://doi.org/10.1353/sof.0.0273>
- Evans, C., Pollack, S., Richard, D., Schway, R.L. (Producers), & Pollack, S. (Director). (1982). *Tootsie* [Motion picture]. Columbia Pictures.
- Finkel, E. J. (2017). *The all-or-nothing marriage: How the best marriages work*. Dutton.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/0092623X.2018.1425029>
- Finkel, E. J., Cheung, E. O., Emery, L. F., Carswell, K. L., & Larson, G. M. (2015). The suffocation model: Why marriage in America is becoming an all-or-nothing institution. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 24(3), 238-244.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0963721415569274>
- Finkel, E. J., Hui, C. M., Carswell, K. L., & Larson, G. M. (2014). The suffocation of marriage: Climbing mount Maslow without enough oxygen. *Psychological Inquiry*, 25(1), 1-41.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1047840X.2014.863723>
- Finkel, E. J., Larson, G. M., Carswell, K. L., & Hui, C. M. (2014). Marriage at the summit: Response to the commentaries. *Psychological Inquiry*, 25(1), 120-145.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1047840X.2014.890512>
- Goldstein, D. (2017). *American moviegoers by age and ethnicity*. Mekko Graphics.  
<https://www.mekkographics.com/american-moviegoers-by-age-and-ethnicity/>
- Goldwyn, S. (Producer), & Wyler, W. (Director). (1946). *The best years of our lives* [Motion picture]. RKO Radio Pictures.
- Grodal, T. (2009). *Embodied visions: Evolution, emotion, culture, and film*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8705.2010.01927.x>
- Hjort, M. (2012). *Film and risk*. Wayne State University Press.
- Ingram, R. (Producer & Director). (1921). *The four horsemen of the apocalypse* [Motion picture]. Metro Pictures Corporation.

- Kreider, R. M., & Ellis, R. (2011). Number, timing, and duration of marriages and divorces: 2009 (Current Population Reports, P70-125). U.S. Census Bureau.  
<https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/2011/demo/p70-125.pdf>
- Maslow, A. H. (1943). A theory of human motivation. *Psychological Review*, 50(4), 370.  
<https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/h0054346>
- Maslow, A. H. (1954). *Motivation and personality*. Harper.
- Mazierska, E. (2015). *From self-fulfilment to survival of the fittest: Work in European cinema from the 1960's to the present*. Berghahn Books.
- Motion Picture Association of America. (2016). *Theatrical market statistics*.  
[https://www.motionpictures.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/MPAA-Theatrical-Market-Statistics-2016\\_Final-1.pdf](https://www.motionpictures.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/MPAA-Theatrical-Market-Statistics-2016_Final-1.pdf)
- Ponti, C. (Producer), & Lean, D. (Director). (1965). *Dr. Zhivago* [Motion picture]. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- Selznick, D.O. (Producer), & Fleming, V. (Director). (1939). *Gone with the wind* [Motion picture]. Loew's Incorporation.
- Stigwood, R., Carr, A. (Producers), & Kleiser, R. (Director). (1978). *Grease* [Motion picture]. Paramount Pictures.
- Stoll, J. (2021). *Frequency of streaming movies in the U.S. 2020, by age group*. Statista.  
<https://www.statista.com/statistics/935493/movies-watching-streaming-frequency-us-by-age/>
- Sutton, D. E., & Wogan, P. (2009). *Hollywood blockbusters: The anthropology of popular movies*. Routledge.
- Wang, W. (2020). *More than one-third of prime-age Americans have never married*. Institute for Family Studies. <https://ifstudies.org/ifs-admin/resources/final2-ifs-single-americansbrief2020.pdf>

Wang, W., & Parker, K. (2014). *Record share of Americans have never married*. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2014/09/24/record-share-of-americans-have-never-married/>

Ziskin, L., Bryce, I. (Producers), & Raimi, S. (Director). (2002). *Spider-man* [Motion picture]. Columbia Pictures.

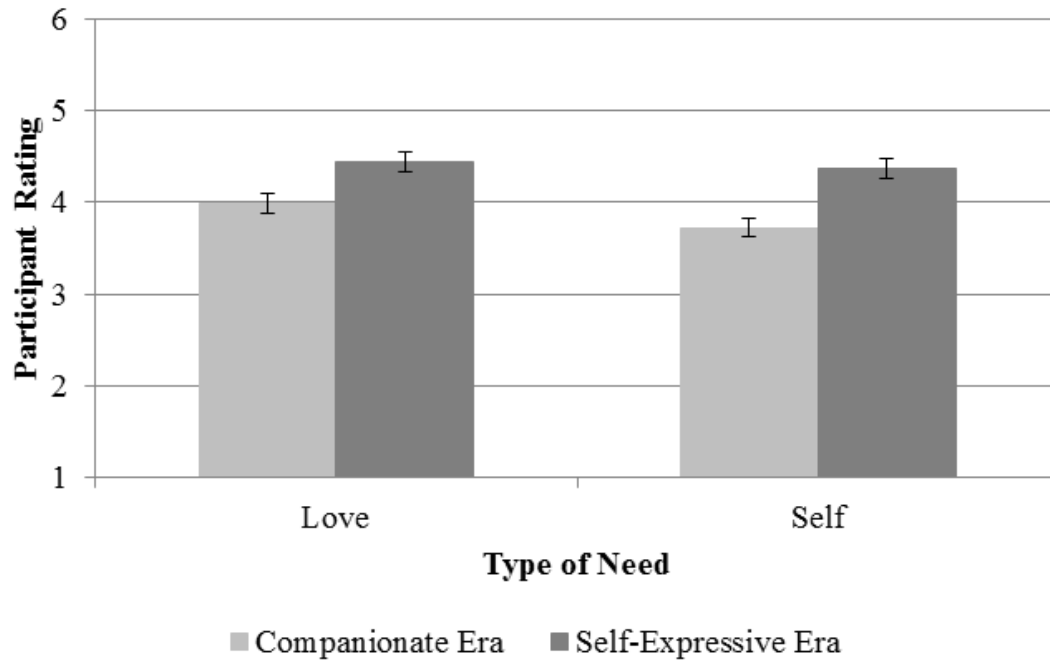
**Table 1***Listing of Viewed Films*

<b>Film</b>	<b>Amount Grossed</b>	<b>Participants</b>
<i>The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse</i> (1921)	\$9.20M	7
<i>Gone with the Wind</i> (1939)	\$198.68M	4
<i>The Best Years of Our Lives</i> (1946)	\$23.65M	6
<i>The Greatest Show on Earth</i> (1952)	\$36.00M	6
<i>Dr. Zhivago</i> (1965)	\$111.72M	5
<i>Grease</i> (1978)	\$188.76M	4
<i>Tootsie</i> (1982)	\$177.20M	7
<i>Titanic</i> (1997)	\$517.36M	5
<i>Spider-Man</i> (2002)	\$403.71M	6
<i>Bridesmaids</i> (2011)	\$169.11M	6

Note. M = Million

**Figure 1**

*Comparison of Ratings of Two types of Needs across Different Film Eras*



*Note. Bars represented mean ratings for specific type of need by assigned film era.*